

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BELGRADE 237

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR YO AU

SUBJ: YUGOSLAV-AUSTRIAN RELATIONS

REF: BELGRADE 6484

1. SUMMARY: AUSTRIAN AMB ALEXANDER OTTO HAS TOLD
AMB HE BELIEVES HE SEES SOME FAINTLY ENCOURAGING SIGNES
IN THE EVOLVING DISPUTE BETWEEN HIS COUNTRY AND YUGOSLAVIA.
END SUMMARY

2. ENCOURAGED BY EMBASSY, OTTO HAS SOUGHT WAYS OF EXPLORING
THE THESIS THAT YUGOSLAV FOREIGN SECRETARY MINIC WAS HINTING
AT A POSSIBLE WAY OUT IN HIS YEAR-END FOREIGN POLICY ADDRES
(REFTEL). WITH THIS IN MIND, HE RECENTLY CALLED ON FSFA
OFFICE FOR NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES DIRECTOR MIODRAG KRDZIC TO
DISCUSS WHETHER THE RETURN OF SO-CALLED "CULTURAL PROPERTIES" MIGHT
BE AN AREA FOR PROGRESS. THESE PROPERTIES ARE MADE UP OF
OBJECTS (MOSTLY PAPERS, BOOKS, ARCHIVES) FROM THE NORTHERN
PORTIONS OF YUGOSLAVIA FORMERLY PART OF THE AUSTO-HUNGARIAN
EMPIRE. THEY WERE HANDED OVER ONCE TO THE YUGOSLAVS AFTER
THE FORMATION OF THE COUNTRY FOLLOWING WWI, BUT THE GERMAN
TOOK THEM BACK AGAIN DURING WWII. THE MAIN ITEM APPEARS TO
BE A MARINE LIBRARY ESTABLISHED BY AN AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN ADMIRAL
NAMED TEGATOFF IN PULA IN THE 19TH CENTURY.

3. THERE SEEMS GENERAL AGREEMENT THE ITEMS SHOULD BE RETURNED
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TO YUGOSLAVIA. THE HITCH IS THAT THE AUSTRIANS WANT THE YUGOSLAVS

TO SIGN A RECEIPT ACKNOWLEDGING THAT EVERYTHING HAS BEEN RETURNED. HOWEVER, THEY CAN'T FIND ALL THE ITEMS, AND THE YUGOSLAVS WON'T SIGN SUCH A RECEIPT UNTIL THEY ARE ALL ACCOUNTED FOR. ACCORDING TO OTTO "EXPERT LEVEL" NEGOTIATIONS ON THIS DILEMMA WERE UNDER WAY AND APPEARED CLOSE TO AGREEMENT ON SATISFACTORY FORMULA IN OCTOBER WHEN THE FIRST NOTE WAS SENT OVER THE SLOVENIAN MINORITY ISSUE. THEY HAVE BEEN STALLED SINCE. AS A RESULT OF THEIR CONVERSATION, OTTO PROPOSED THAT KRDZIC LOOK INTO REOPENING THESE NEGOTIATIONS. KRDZIC SAID HE WOULD EXPLORE THE PROPOSAL AND RESPOND.

4. OTHER POSSIBLY ENCOURAGING SIGNS OTTO SEES INCLUDE WHAT MAY BE A LOWERING IN THE LEVEL OF YUGOSLAV PRESS CLAMOR. OTTO TALKED PRIVATELY TO TITO FOR SIX OR SEVEN MINUTES DECEMBER 14 AT TITO'S ANNUAL DIPLOMATIC HUNT (HE HAD ASKED TITO'S PROTOCOL CHIEF TO ARRANGE THIS) AND SAID SOMETHING MUST BE DONE TO COOL THE SITUATION. HE SUGGESTED PERHAPS TITO COULD RECEIVE KREISKY TO THIS PURPOSE. TITO SAID THIS WOULDN'T BE POSSIBLE AT THIS TIME, BUT COUNTERED WITH A SUGGESTION THAT THE AUSTRIANS STOP THEIR PRESS ATTACKS ON YUGOSLAVIA. WHEN OTTO REJOINED THAT THIS WAS A TWO-WAY STREET, TITO SAID HE WOULD "TAKE CARE OF THAT".

5. ALSO, OTTO SAYS THE YUGOSLAVS ARE SUDDENLY RESPONDING TO SOCIAL OVERTURES WHERE THEY HAD NOT BEFORE. FOR SOME TIME HE HAD BEEN TRYING TO INVITE RANKING YUGOSLAVS, SUCH AS KRDZIC, AND WAS ALWAYS TOLD THAT THEY WERE TOO BUSY. HE HAS NOW RECEIVED ACCEPTANCES WITHIN A DAY TO A DINNER INVITATION FOR JAN 28 FROM KRDZIC, PRESIDENCY PROTOCOL CHIEF MIRKO MULUTINOVIC, AND TITO'S FOREIGN POLICY ADVISOR ANDJELKO BLAZEVIC. AT THIS DINNER OTTO PLANS TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF FOSTERING BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THE AUSTRIAN AND YUGOSLAV IPU DELEGATIONS DURING THE IPU CSCE MEETING JAN 31-FEB 6 IN BELGRADE.

6. THESE ARE THE FIRST APPARENTLY ENCOURAGING SIGNS THE AUSTRIANS HAVE SEEN HERE SINCE THIS WHOLE AFFAIR HEATED UP, AND OTTO AT LEAST IS TRYING HARD TO FIND SOME AVENUE TO MOVE DISCUSSIONS FROM THE NEWSPAPERS BACK TO THE CONFERENCE TABLE.
TOON

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